

He's reclusive to the point of being inaudible. In fact, being the only brother of Lata Mangeshkar has been a mixed blessing for this media-shy singer-composer.

Engrossed in his self-chosen world of harmony, Hridayanath Mangeshkar emerges from his shell just this once to speak his mind.

Your new *bhajan* album *Meera Soor Kabeera* with *Lataji* comes after more than 20 years of your last collaboration. How come?

After our last album *Chala Vai Des*, I wanted to put together an album of Meerabai's *bhajans*. I worked on that for some time. Then I started work on an album of Kabeer *bhajans*.

But in the mid-1980s, the mood and atmosphere of the music world underwent a drastic change. I didn't want to be part of the MTV culture. Even *didi* advised me to stay away.

Then HMV came under a cloud. I didn't want to work with any other company. So I started concentrating on my live programmes.



Satisfaction

TUNE INTO HRIDAYNATH MANGESHKAR

Subsequently, when I revived my Meera and Kabeer projects, I blended the *bhajans* of Meera, Surdas and Kabeer in one album. To date, my *bhajans* in *Chala Vai Des* are understood mainly by listeners in Pakistan. I wanted my new *bhajan* album to appeal to young listeners.

But *Chala Vai Des* was a huge success.

Agreed, but that album was popular because of the tunes and *didi's* singing, not because of

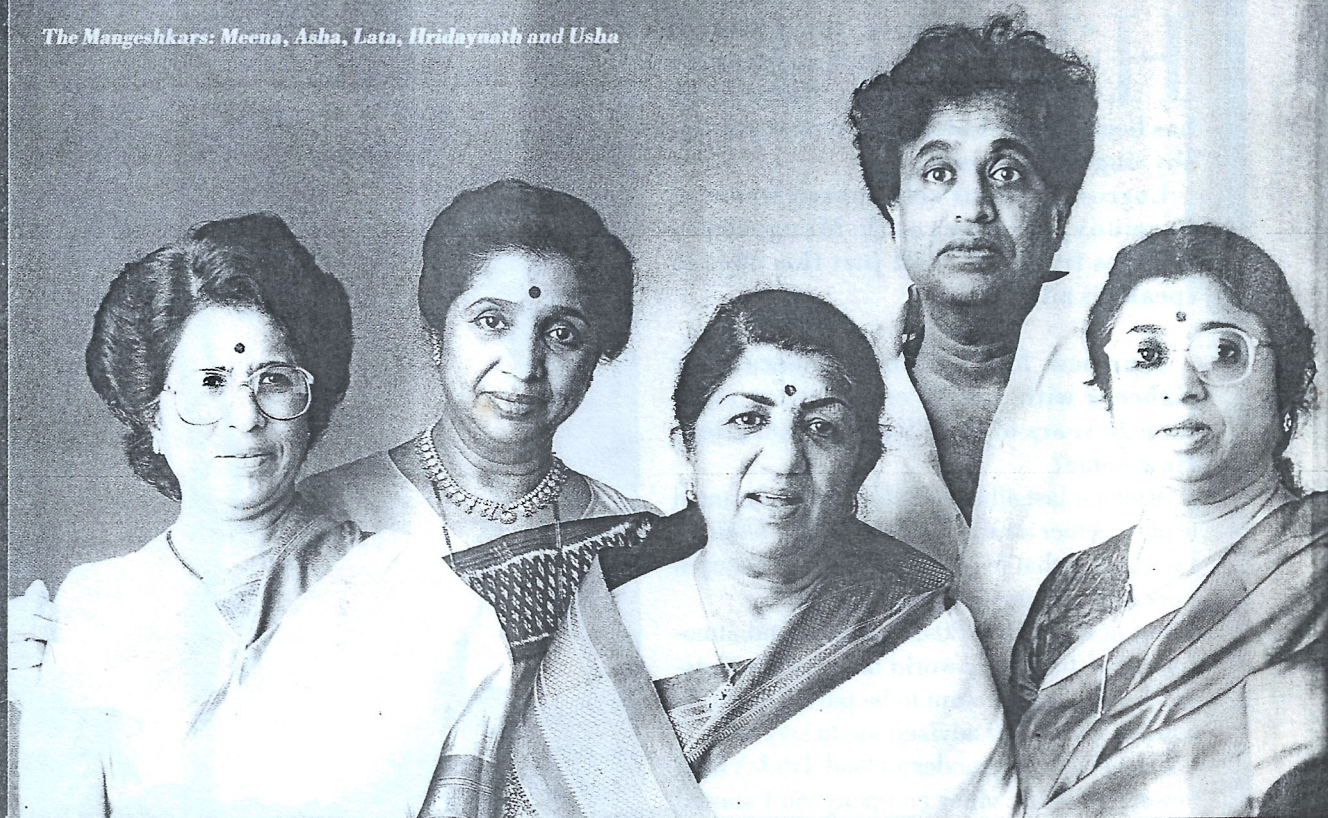
the poetry. I want today's listeners to understand the poetry while appreciating *didi's* singing. I've simplified some of the original poetry. I wonder if Kabeer, Meerabai and Surdas would have approved if they were alive.

Why have you worked so selectively in Hindi films?

On the contrary, very few producers select me. It's never been in my nature to seek work. I

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The Mangeshkars: Meena, Asha, Lata, Hridaynath and Usha



**There was only one Krishna in the *Mahabharat*.
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don't even know where the studios are located, which producer is working on which project and what kind of clothes the heroes wear these days. Apart from my own recordings, I've never been part of show business.

Nowadays, it's become a must for music composers to attend every party and awards function. I can't do all that. I can only socialise with the few people I'm comfortable with.

Right now, I'm building a hospital for the poor in Pune. *Main maang raha hoon aur log daan de rahe hain*. We've built the hospital in just eleven months, it will be opened this October. I never thought it would be so easy.

Your songs in Ketan Mehta's *Maya Memsaab* and Gulzar's *Lekin* are memorable.

That was possible because of the understanding shared with those directors. They promised not to interfere with the tunes. If the music in *Maya Memsaab* didn't get proper exposure, it was just my bad luck.

Lekin was my most successful Hindi film score, though I'd say *Maya Memsaab* was bet-

ter in quality. Then I did some satisfactory work in a Smita Patil film called *Mere Saath Chal*. I've no idea what happened to it.

When and how did you actually start composing?

I started composing when I was only 17. The songs were *Nis din barsat nain hamare* and *Barse boondiya saawan ki*. I'd like to think that I've always been ahead of the times.

I've inherited this quality. My father Pandit Dinanath Mangeshkar died in a pathetic financial condition. During his lifetime he wasn't given his due. Today he has hordes of followers in Maharashtra. His style of singing is considered exemplary. My father had told *didi*, "Fifty years from now people will realise the value of my music."

Perhaps I'm destined to suffer the same fate. I feel my work is ahead of its time by at least 20 years. A Marathi song which I'd composed and recorded at the age of 17, was a failure on its release. Today people pay me lakhs to sing that number at live concerts. It has taken

them 40 years to realise the value of that song.

It doesn't help much to gain recognition 40 years after a creation.

(Laughs) Well, I've got lots of recognition in Marathi films. Hindi *filmon mein, mere swabhav ki vajah se kuch jamaa nahin*.

Lataji says quite a few Hindi film music composers have tried to pull you down.

By the grace of God I've never needed to play games. If some composers have played games with me, I've ignored them. Instead I've concentrated on my *riyaz* and live concerts. Today I'm much better off, healthwise and financially than so many music composers who may have pulled me down.

Is it true that Raj Kapoor offered you Satyam Shivam Sundaram?

He had mentioned it to me. But he hadn't signed me officially. Way back in 1955 when I recorded a song at the age of 17, Raj *saab* had given me a lot of respect. He presented me with a wrist-watch. He made me sing my song from 10 in the night till four in the morning. But af-

Nowadays audiences *see* songs, they no longer *hear* them.

If a song looks attractive on TV, it becomes a hit. I feel so bad about the music of *Henna*. I think Ravindra Jain did a fine job of the compositions. But the music didn't fetch him awards or further assignments.

Have you liked anything after Henna?

I'd liked some of Nadeem-Shravan's songs. But later my son Baijnath got me a tape and I found they were directly lifted from Pakistani compositions. *Bahut kharaab lagta hai*. Still, I don't really feel shocked by this trend of lifting songs. In my own career as a composer, I've lifted around 10 songs directly from other sources. But I've always given credit to the original composer.

I loved Mehdi Hassan's *Ab ke bichhde* so much that I used it in a Marathi song. But Mehdi Hassan's name was mentioned in the credits. When I play such adapted songs on stage, I make it a point to announce that they're not my original compositions.

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ter that, he never called me to offer me a film. I never tried to meet him either.

Lataji says you never liked her recommending your name to producers.

Even when she wanted to, I stopped her. She once suggested that we should compose music together. I said, "You go ahead and I'll help you. But I'll never hold your hand to step up the ladder."

I don't have huge homes and cars like other musicians. *Lekin jo kuch hai, mera hai*. I eat well. The humble homes that I have in Pune and Mumbai are my own. I don't own a Mercedes, I'm happy with my Maruti.

I'm equally comfortable singing for an audience of 200 or two lakhs. No matter what the size of the audience, they come to hear Hridayanath Mangeshkar. I don't need props when I sing on stage.

What's your opinion of present-day music?

The sound has become too gimmicky. The arrangers have more work than the composers.

What's your opinion of Lataji and Ashaji as singers?

I've grown up with them. I guess an artiste's personality is bound to reflect in his or her art. There have been good singers like Kishore Kumar and Mohammed Rafi, and there are Asha Bhosle and Anuradha Paudwal. But no one can equal *didi*.

I've been a practising musician for 50 years...and I've never encountered a singer like her. And I'm not saying this because she's my sister. I could say the same about my other sisters Ashaji and Ushaji or about my guru Ustad Amir Khan. But I won't. They are not as timeless as Lata Mangeshkar. There was only one Krishna in the *Mahabharat*. And there's only one Lata Mangeshkar.

So you'll take another 20 years to cut another album with her, will you?

(Laughs) I don't have that many years left. I'm 65. Both *didi* and I have our feet on the other side of the river.

Subhash K. Jha